

Christmas Ruins

By Shirley M. Haws

When I was a child, I was always ruining my Christmas by finding out what I was getting. Not that I snooped! In fact, I tried my best not to find out. Knowing what you're getting for Christmas takes away the anticipation, which is the best part of it. Each time I discovered the present Santa was to bring, I would feel completely let down. You received only one gift from Santa in those days, so if you knew one, you knew them all. When I saw a present before Christmas, I never enjoyed it. In fact I hated it. I somehow blamed it for spoiling my Christmas.

I received a darling overstuffed rocking chair for Christmas one year. It was made of a dainty blue and pink flowered fabric, and padded so well you would sink like you were sitting on a feather bed. It was the envy of the neighborhood. My friends loved to sit in it. They felt just like adults as they rocked back and forth. Not me! You see, I found that chair in our grainery. I went to get some wheat to feed the chickens. That blasted chair ruined my Christmas!

When I was about five years old, I wanted a pair of ice skates more than anything in the world. My three older brothers all had black skates, but I didn't want black; white is a girl's color. Black was better than nothing, and I used to sneak them, put them on, and go outside the door. I was hard to hold on to the door to keep from falling, and when I finally was outside, I'd try to skate in the snow. Of course, no one can skate in snow, even if the skates aren't six inches too long, but I kept trying.

One day when no one was around, I put the skates on and started for my best friend's house. Carol lived three blocks away, but I wanted her to see me in the skates. In fact, I was determined! I limped about 25 steps before realizing that it wouldn't work. I go down on my hands and knees and crawled the rest of the way. Getting to Carol's house wasn't also exciting to see the envy in Carol's eyes. The excitement left when I realized that some way I had to get back home.

After the first block, I understood what suffering was all about. I would crawl on my knees, then roll for awhile. When I could stand that no longer, I'd stand up and limp a couple of wobbly steps. This cycle was gone through many times before I got home. I was so cold, my skin felt like it would split open. My face was wet from rolling in the snow. The tears that sneaked from the corner of my eyes and down my face would freeze on the tip of my chin.

After what seemed an eternity I made it, only to find that my suffering wasn't over. I had open sores on my feet, a blister the size of a dollar on each knee, and my ears had frostbite. That's all right, I said to myself, it was worth it! Carol had seen me in ice skates!

Every Christmas for the next three years I would ask for ice skates. I was always told that they didn't make them small enough. On the fourth year, I went through the same steps, and was told the same thing. One evening I went across the street to the gym, where the annual Christmas Pageant was always held, to watch it. Suddenly I had to go to the bathroom. I ran home quickly and opened the door. There was Mom showing some white girl's ice skates to Mary Anderson, our next door neighbor.

One December, I was dusting the living room, As I was polishing the piano, I picked up my Mother's special blue vase, she had received as a wedding gift. I dusted it very carefully on the outside. Then I did something I had never done before. In fact, what young girl ever dusts the inside of a base? I did. I felt a hard box, took it out, opened it and there was the most beautiful ring I had ever seen. It had four gold roses, each with a ruby center. They were surrounding another large ruby. You guessed it! It was my Christmas.

May parents had saved all year to buy me something extra special. They were looking forward to Christmas, excited to see my surprised excitement when I opened my special gift. Have you ever tried to act excited and thrilled when your Christmas had been ruined? Have you ever tried to make excuses to a hurt Mother

and Dad who wondered why the ring they were so thrilled to give seldom was worn?

The years have passed, and my Christmas tragedies have turned into some of my fondest memories. In my home, I have a closet saved for my most prized precious possessions. If you came to my house today, you could open that closet door and see a flowered overstuffed rocking chair, still almost new, a pair of white, girls shoe skates, much too small for me now, and a darling ring, which has four gold roses with a ruby center.